

# Dazzling \$9.6 Million Florida Estate With Its Own Baseball Field Comes Complete With a Home Run of a Backstory



by Larissa Runkle

**E**ight miles from Florida's Capitol, past a gated entrance, a magnolia-lined driveway delivers you to a 6,000-square-foot cypress home that took shape from a hand-drawn sketch made after a family ski trip.

The 100-acre property, known as Old St. Augustine Hills, is now on the market for the first time in more than 20 years, with an asking price of \$9.6 million, and comes with a story that any Florida State baseball fan will appreciate.

The land's modern history began in 1960, when retired Navy captain Albert Gallatin Neal bought the acreage, dug its ponds and planted more than 4,000 trees across the idyllic plot, which is located just outside of Tallahassee.

His widow, Margaret, fielded repeated offers from developers over the years and turned them all down, waiting instead for a family to take on the land.

She found that family in 2003, when current owners David and René Hanselman bought the property, which fronts Old St. Augustine Road, a stretch of the historic El Camino Real dating to the 1680s.

The Hanselmans took on not only a beautiful piece of land—but also a rich legacy in the world of college and professional baseball, one that was started by the Neal family, whose lives were closely intertwined with the sport in more ways than one.

Perhaps the most obvious connection comes in the form of the private baseball field found on the estate, which is fully irrigated and has played host to more than a few games over the years.

Margaret Neal's son married the sister of Dick Howser, an FSU star who later managed the New York Yankees and led the Kansas City Royals to the 1985 World Series. Howser also spent time on the land, reportedly including some of his final days.

David, who played ball at FSU and Troy State, built a private ballfield on the property, and in 2021 the legendary Florida State coach Mike Martin visited for one of the Hanselmans' fish fries.

“The baseball thread runs right through this place. David built a real ball field here—chalk lines, scoreboard, lighted batting cage—taught his son to pitch on it, and watched that son go on to pitch in college,” says listing agent Lori Bembry Weldon of JON KOHLER & ASSOCIATES.

For those without a penchant for baseball, the listing notes that this particular slice of the land could easily be put to other uses in the future.

“The fully irrigated ball field can serve multiple purposes: a pickleball court, putting green, tennis courts or equestrian paddocks,” it states.

But the residence itself is a home run even without the baseball connections.

Built in 2005 in a custom cypress post-and-beam style, the house has six bedrooms and 7.5 baths. René, a designer, sketched the original concept and worked with architect Ken Pieper to bring it to life, then designed every piece of molding, door and cabinet, which included twenty pages of



custom casework.

A stained-glass front door was created with artist Karen Pritzel, and a nine-foot magnolia chandelier in the foyer came from the New Mexico studio Jezebel.

“Original Paul Tamanian artwork was commissioned for the home,” says Weldon. “Walking in is like entering a lodge — huge cypress beams, wood floors, craftsmanship that’s simply incredible. In the owners’ words, a work of art.”

The grounds are also something to behold, with a cypress duck pond visible from the living room, spring-fed bass ponds, a waterfall pool, a wood-fired outdoor kitchen and a “cook shack” that’s hosted years of long lunches.



“Overlooking the ballfield area sits the gardening shed [with] raised beds planted with wildflowers and fresh vegetables, gathered around a lovely sitting area that connects to the owner’s workshop, perfect for maintenance projects and hobbies, with lights, water, and power throughout,” the listing continues.

“It is the current owners’ favorite spot early in the morning—a quieter luxury still, coffee in hand and hands in the dirt. It is the rare estate that gives you something to do at first light, and nothing you ever have to do.”

While much has already been made of the land, Weldon says it is still ripe with potential.

“The land is remarkably diverse, and it has also been continuously improved. Prescribed burns and selective timbering have returned it to its natural state,” Weldon adds.

Another important note: this home is a completely updated, turnkey offering.

“Custom furniture, artwork and property equipment convey with the sale,” Weldon says. “There is zero deferred maintenance on this property, and I mean zero.”

In preparation for the sale, the owners refreshed the home, refinishing the wormy chestnut floors through the main living areas and adding new flooring in the kitchen. The whole-home Lutron lighting and Sonos audio systems, which extend to the back porch, outdoor kitchen and pool deck, are current throughout.

“Close the gate and the world falls away,” Weldon says. “Open it, and the Gulf Coast is just eighteen miles south.”